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SUBJECT: "NO SURPRISES" IN FRENCH SPECIAL ENVOY JACK LANG,S
VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

REF: A. PARIS 1379
[1](#)B. PARIS 1389

Classified By: Andrew Young, Acting Minister Counselor, reasons 1.4, b.
and d.

[1](#)1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: French Special Envoy Jack Lang urged DPRK leaders to return to Six-Party Talks during his five day "information-gathering" tour of North Korea from November 9-14 and visit to Beijing from November 5-9. MFA PDAS for Asia Thierry Viteau, who accompanied Lang to Pyongyang and Beijing, confirmed on November 20 with Pol Counselor that Lang met with defacto DPRK head of state Kim Yong-Nam, FM Pak Ui-Chun, deputy FM for Europe Kung Sok-Ung, and the Minister of Culture Kang Nung-Ju. Kim Jong-Il was not in Pyongyang at the time, according to Viteau, and was consequently unavailable to meet Lang. Viteau described the trip as containing "no surprises" and provided a detailed account of the DPRK position on the non-proliferation and disarmament, human rights, and peninsular relations. Presidential Advisor Bertrand Lotholary told PolCouns on November 23 the main take-away from the visit was a DPRK "gesture" to engage in a human rights "exchange" with France. END SUMMARY.

NON-PROLIFERATION/DISARMEMENT

[1](#)2. (C/NF) In response to Lang's urging to return to the Six-Party Talks, DPRK leaders said that multilateral talks were a possibility in the future, that the Six-Party Talks format could be a possible iteration of such multilateral talks, but the DPRK first required direct bilateral engagement with the United States. (Note: The planned Ambassador Bosworth visit to Pyongyang was not yet public at the time of these meetings) Viteau said that the DPRK justified maintenance of their nuclear program to protect the country from foreign menaces, most notably nuclear-armed or nuclear protected neighbors. Although they spoke of Kim Il-Song's dying wish to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, DPRK officials said that disarmament was out of the question for the time being. Nevertheless, DPRK officials reaffirmed that North Korea would respect its international non-proliferation commitments. Viteau also clarified that the North Koreans provided no written statement of their intent to respect international commitments but would only reaffirm this commitment verbally.

HUMAN RIGHTS: THE RIGHTS OF THE STATE

[1](#)3. (C/NF) According to the MFA, the DPRK maintained throughout Lang's visit that human rights were defined as "the rights of the state" in North Korea. DPRK officials urged foreign nations and international organizations to

respect their sovereignty by forgoing interference in so called "domestic issues." According to Viteau, the DPRK made a "gesture" to France in response to Lang's visit by suggesting a willingness to have an exchange with France on human rights issues. (Presidential Advisor for Asia Lotholary told PolCouns on November 23 that France would welcome such a dialogue to advocate themes from the EU Human Rights dialogue with the DPRK that has been suspended by Pyongyang). DPRK officials rejected the possibility of resuming the EU-DPRK human rights dialogue unless the EU drops its support for country-specific resolutions critical of North Korea in the United Nations and the Human Rights Council. In response to the not-yet publicly confirmed visit of U.S. Envoy Ambassador Bosworth, the DPRK representatives told Lang that they welcomed the visit but viewed the U.S. as the "demandeur" who needed to initiate discussions with North Korea.

14. (C/NF) Regarding France-DPRK bilateral relations and Lang's reported proposals for human rights exchanges with North Korea, Viteau said that the DPRK representatives never raised the issue of normalizing diplomatic relations, although they cited the mutually-beneficial economic ties between France and North Korea during the 1960s and expressed support for positive economic change. The DPRK officials spoke favorably of former President Mitterrand's 1981 visit to North Korea (when he visited as a socialist party leader). Emphasizing that there were no concrete plans for normalization, both Lotholary and Viteau affirmed that France "has a chip" in the game and will not spend it without consultation with partners. Lotholary and Viteau suggested France might be interested in expanding the work of two existing French NGOs in North Korea or exploring new ideas of for cultural exchange of students between the two countries.

INTER-KOREAN PENINSULAR RELATIONS

15. (C/NF) When questioned on the subject of inter-Korean relations, DPRK interlocutors firmly rejected President Lee Myun-Bac's "Grand Bargain" as "unrealistic". Viteau explained that the perception in North Korea of any progress made towards improving inter-Korean relations was thanks to Kim Jong-Il, whose work had been stalled and sabotaged by U.S. and South Korean officials. Viteau also stressed that DPRK interlocutors hewed very closely to approved talking points on inter-Korean relations.

16. (C/NF) Viteau commented on the delegation's perceptions of life in the DPRK as informed by consultations with EU Ambassadors, NGOs, and visits to Panmunjom and Kaesong. He described ubiquitous references to Kim Jong-Il and Kim Il-Song as the source of all national inspiration ranging from philosophy to local swimming pools. He explained that in the tiny North Korean "free market," all surplus produce was available for purchase at prices negotiated within designated price bands. Mostly devoid of products, some North Korean stores contained consumer items from China, Taiwan, and Thailand. Viteau was told by his interlocutors that Kim Jong-Il's efforts to prepare his youngest son Kim Jong-Un to succeed him stalled of late, citing evidence that recently prepared folks songs lauding Kim Jong-Un had suddenly disappeared from public airwaves this past September. (Biographic Note: Viteau served as French DCM in Seoul in the late 1980s).

LANG'S VISIT TO CHINA

17. (C/NF) Lang also visited Beijing during this trip, where he met with state counselor Dai Binguo, deputy FM for North Korea Wu Dawei, and Communist Party international liaison Liu Hongcai. Viteau said that the Chinese had "no illusions" that bringing North Korea to the negotiation table would be easy but welcomed bilateral discussions between the U.S. and North Korea to facilitate this effort. (Note: Ambassador Bosworth's planned visit was not public by the time of these meetings; however, partners were aware of the plan.) Viteau noted the Chinese recognized the difficulties of bringing the

DPRK to the negotiating table, downplayed their ability to compel DPRK actions, and reiterated the PRC national interest in both supporting denuclearization of the Korean peninsular and preventing a collapse of the DPRK that would bring instability to China's borders.

FOLLOW-UP

18. (C/NF) Viteau said that Lang would independently draft a report to President Sarkozy without input from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He could not predict the timing of its release. Lotholary indicated this report could be presented to the President as early as late November or early December.

Both Lotholary and Viteau reiterated French appreciation for the concerns raised by PolCouns for Five-party coordination in all aspects of international engagement with the DPRK.

19. (C/NF) Comment: Post views Lang's visit as a one-off, unlikely to have a sustained impact on the DPRK dossier. The publicity-seeking Lang probably will attempt to draw attention to himself and his mission when he reports to President Sarkozy. Nevertheless, French officials underscored their commitment to consulting with the Five Parties by reaffirming that Lang consulted in Tokyo, Seoul, Washington, and Beijing prior to his mission. On the issue of potential diplomatic recognition, the French reiterated that any decision on bilateral normalization rests with President Sarkozy at the recommendation of FM Kouchner (Ref A reports Kouchner's views). The French studiously underscored their commitment to support the Six-Party Talk process and framework, the need for sensitivity in timing on all aspects of this dossier, and the fact that Lang had no authority to negotiate. Asserting Lang "took note" of all DPRK statements, the French again described Lang's trip as an informational fact-finding mission. Post anticipates a request for a read-out on Ambassador Bosworth's mission and stands ready to share appropriate elements with allies.

RIVKIN